A Stand-Alone Computerized Patient GYN Database: Small System, Great Benefits

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Personal computers are being used by most private physicians for accounting and billing. Very few doctors are using them for medical record management. In his poster presentation, the authors demonstrates how his self-designed computerized medical record system can be an effective tool in the private office setting as well as in a clinic environment. He also shows how it can be both patient and user friendly, and how it can improve the quality of medical care.

A problem oriented computerized record system was designed by the author for gynecological patients. It is an application program using a proprietary database management system. It runs under Windows on a stand-alone IBM compatible personal computer. It generates progress notes in the problem-oriented SOAP format, medication prescriptions, and laboratory request forms. It is integrated with a spreadsheet program, a personal information manager and a proprietary drug interaction program. These programs are task-switched to allow 1) generation of referral letters and other correspondence, 2) obstetrical calculations, and 3) medication interaction checks.

The system has been used successfully in a private OB-GYN practice as well as in an HMO environment. In the private setting, patients observed the author entering their medical data into the computer and were allowed to view their record and make comments and suggestions as the data was entered. They were impressed with the thoroughness, accuracy, availability and legibility of the record and appreciated being given copies of their visits to take home with them. The nursing staff and referring physicians also appreciated the promptness, clarity and orderliness of the records.

Presently, the computer is being used in the author's office in an HMO multispecialty clinic. The benefits of the system to patients and providers are similar to those in the private practice setting. In a large center, where more than one provider share the traditional paper records, the instant availability of the patient data on the author's own computer is the most outstanding benefit.

This small record system not only improves the efficiency of record keeping but can also improve the quality of medical care. By prompting the physician to consider ordering appropriate tests and by insuring that all important data are recorded, the computer can assist the physician in providing better total patient care. The system's automated patient follow-up feature also contributes to improved quality.

It is unfortunate that, in spite of the obvious benefits, computerized patient records have not become commonplace in physicians' offices, much less in hospitals. It is the author's suggestion that we improve this situation by implementing simple office based record systems. This will pave the way for the acceptance of more complex networks in the future.

In the poster presentation, the author provides the following: 1) photographs showing the patient-doctor-computer interaction setting, 2) sample screen forms and displays, 3) sample printouts of office visits, referral letters and prescriptions, and 4) text boards describing how this low cost, simple system can be utilized by office providers. The author's concept of the gradual introduction of PC's into the medical workplace is also addressed.

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